(b)how much food stuffs are saved annually by radiation technology indicating the figures for vegetables, fruits, fish and other grains; and

(c) the value of such food commodities saved by way of radiation?

THE MINISTER OF STATE INTHE DEPARTMENT OF ATOMIC ENERGY (SHRIMATIVASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) About one thousand (1000) tonnes of spices have been processed till date in the only Technology Demonstration Plant set up by the Department of Atomic Energy in January 2000 with a capacity to process thirty (30) tonnes spices per day.

(b) Nil, in view of what is stated above.

(c) As only spices are being irradiated so far and these are consumed in the domestic market and also exported, it is difficult to quantify exact savings. However, it may be said that the 15%-20% of spices that were being lost due to spoilage are now being saved.

Closure of Tarapur Atomic Centre

763. SHRI SATISH PRADHAN: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the news report which appeared in vernacular daily "Loksatta" dated the 21st January 2002 regarding closing of Tarapur Atomic Centre by May 2002;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ATOMIC ENERGY (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) Lok Satta (Mumbai edition) on 21.01.2002 carried a news item regarding Tarapur Atomic Power Station (TAPS), issued by Press Trust of India, Hyderabad. According to this news item, Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB) has permitted operation of TAPS up to 31.05.2002, as an interim measure to allow time for comprehensive assessment and review of safety related issues for long term continued operation of the plant. In India, Nuclear Power Plants are given licence for operation for a specified period of time, presently three years at a stretch. The present licence in »espect of TAPS is for operations up to 31.05.2002. The safety assessment of the plant for long term continued operation is expected to be completed shortly for review by AERB. This is part of th* re-licensing

process and is not due to any unsafe condition in the plant. Based on this, the plant is expected to be authorised for further continued operation beyond May. 2002.

Village Telephones by Telecom Companies

764. SHRI C.P. THIRUNAVUKKARASU: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that telecom companies failed to fulfil their existing targets of providing village telephones, as per the National Telecom Policy;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the reasons for not fulfilling the targets; and

(d) the action proposed by Government against these companies?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The six private sector licensees of Basic Telephone Service have not been able to fulfill their voluntarily committed performance obligations in respect of provision of Village Public Telephones (VPTs). The commitments made vis-a-vis performance shown by them for provision of VPTs is enclosed as statement (See below).

(c) The private Basic Telephone Service Operators have apparently so far been focusing their efforts on providing service mainly in urban areas and performance/roll out of service in rural areas has been insignificant.

(d) Government has recovered Liquidated Damage (LD) charges for their delay in performance and made it clear that their committed performance obligations cannot be diluted in any case. Government has asked them to complete the unfulfilled committed roll out obligations by December 2002 against submission of Additional Performance Bank Guarantees and Deed of Guarantees. Further, Government has already taken appropriate steps to resolve their problems.